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National lab unveils app to celebrate National Nuclear Science Week

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho – In concert with the 2012 kick-off of National Nuclear Science Week, Idaho National Laboratory has launched a one-of-a-kind mobile app. It allows smartphone and tablet users to quickly and easily get a sense of INL's nuclear energy research capabilities and facilities, without investing the multiple days it would take for a comparable in-person tour.

With the app, university and industry representatives, government leaders and members of the public have a new, visually compelling means of finding out what kind of nuclear energy research goes on at the lab, which serves as the national nuclear laboratory.

"Time is a precious resource for all of us," said Harold McFarlane, interim associate laboratory director for Nuclear Science and Technology. "By making this comprehensive app available, we're able to save time and money for our own staff and more importantly, that of prospective research partners and industry representatives who need to know in real time if we've got the assets and abilities they're looking for to develop, test and prove their theses and technologies."

"The fact is, the nation has made significant investments in establishing unique infrastructure for advancing nuclear energy research, development, demonstration and deployment here in Idaho," said David Hill, deputy laboratory director for Science and Technology. "Because no one can afford to recreate what we have at INL, it's critical that we do what we can to increase awareness of these distinctive capabilities."

In a straightforward way, the INL Nuclear Research Virtual Tour App provides a quick overview of the lab, a description of the national priority nuclear research it performs, what specific capabilities INL has to perform the research, concluding with a pictorial guide of the discrete facilities involved. Through a blend of videos, photos, illustrations and text, users can gain a fuller notion of what exists and what's possible in groundbreaking nuclear energy research at INL.

"We will continue to encourage visitors to come tour INL, but in case that's not possible, the app serves as the next best thing," said Amy Lientz, director of Communications and Governmental Affairs. "We chose a technology solution that's custom-made for mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. We recognize we are a mobile society and want to respond to that reality."

Taking the virtual tour is as simple as loading the free mobile app onto your smartphone or tablet from one of several locations. Currently, the app can be viewed from http://nuclearapp.inl.gov using an Internet-connected HTML5/JavaScript-enabled browser like Apple Safari or Google Chrome. The Google Chrome Frame plug-in makes the app viewable on Internet Explorer as well.

A native Android app for tablets is currently available on the Android Market, while efforts continue on development of native Android smartphone and Apple iOS apps. A condensed version of the app is available in flipbook form at http://www.inl.gov/publications/the-national-nuclear-laboratory.

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of DOE's strategic goal areas: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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